

Maine, where Prohibition in its most stringent form prevails, is full of low places in which ardent spirits, and ardent spirits we may be sure of the worst quality, are sold. From Iowa, Nova Scotia, from every prohibited or Scott Act district, testimonies to the same effect come in; nor does it appear that the introduction of these laws has at all decreased the manufacture of ardent spirits. From the very earliest times the use of stimulating and cheering beverages has been the universal habit of mankind. The fact is attested by the Hebrew records, by the Greek mythology, by those Vedic hymns which most authentically present to us the habits of man in his original seat; and if the use of fermented liquors is in itself a sin, all humanity, including Christ and his Apostles, has sinned till now. Is it likely that by the fiat of any legislator, a particular section of the race, in close communication with the rest, can be made suddenly to change that which has become a second nature and submit at once to total abstinence? You cannot extirpate the taste for stimulants by force; you may turn it into other channels and perhaps in doing so deprave it: you do deprave it when from beer and wine you drive men to ardent spirits; or possibly to opium. The minister or the philanthropist sipping his tea or coffee feels that he has done a very good work in cutting off from the labourer on the Pacific Railway his cup of beer; but, as we saw the other day, the labourer in place of his cup of beer is supplied by the smuggler with spirits which may truly be said to be poison. Dram-drinking is the real evil; whatever can be done to discourage it and promote the taste for milder beverages let us do, and with that let us be content. Moral influences have been working a happy change in the habits of our people: Prohibitionist journals themselves admit it; and those influences can only be weakened by an attempt suddenly to force upon the mass of the people an impracticable asceticism. Puritan experience has taught us that after a reign of Blue Law comes a revolt against morality.

At last we are at the end of the Conspiracy Case. Few dispassionate men doubt that it would have been far better had the Premier, when the case came to his knowledge, brought it at once before the House, and dealt with it as a question of privilege. Probably he is himself of that opinion by this time. He would in that way have gained all and more than all the party advantages which he could possibly have promised himself by the course which he has taken, and which has proved futile as well as intricate and expensive. If he had thought fit afterwards to bring in a Bill making an attempt to bribe members of the Legislature a penal offence for the future well and good: political crime is like other crime, capable of being as clearly defined for legal purposes, and certainly not less deserving of punishment. As to the main fact, however, no doubt can be entertained. The Opposition had just been putting forth its whole strength at a General Election in a deadlift effort to oust the Government, and had narrowly missed success. Some violent or interested partisans conceived the idea of securing by bribery the few votes requisite to turn the balance. Those members of the Ministerial Party who, by reputation or circumstances, seemed most open to corrupt approaches would of course be selected for the attempt; our belief in the fact, therefore, is not shaken by anything subsequently brought forward on the part of the defence to discredit the character of these men, with whom the defendants, by their own showing, chose to associate. A sum of money was voluntarily deposited in the hands of the Speaker by members of the Legislature who stated that it had been offered them as a bribe. That statement unquestionably was true. Cobwebs of ingenious hypothesis have of course been woven by the counsel for the defence, but common sense sweeps them away. An American lumberer, seeking for his own commercial ends to alter the policy of the Government with respect to timber limits, was drawn into the plot, for the sake of the money with which his purse was supposed to be filled. Whether the members approached, or any of them, dallied with corruption and peached only when they found that peaching would be more to their advantage than the acceptance of the bribe, is a matter of surmise and nothing more; their personal honour would have been better guarded had they indignantly repelled the tempter and brought the matter at once before the House; but it is fair to them to remark that in what appears to us the most questionable part of their conduct they acted with the privity and under the advice of the Attorney-General. It was hoped by the Government that the thread of the conspiracy might be traced up to Ottawa, and the Royal Commission, with an unbounded scope of inquiry, was apparently appointed for that purpose. But nothing was disclosed beyond the fact already patent that one of the persons implicated was a law agent of the Tory Party. It is but just to Sir David Macpherson to repeat that the document produced as connecting his name with the affair is totally devoid of any such significance. We have all deplored the stain brought upon the honour of the Province; it is redeemed only by the strict impartiality

with which the Chief Justice presided at the trial, and which reminds us of the happy fact that our judiciary is still sound.

WE had convinced ourselves that in the dispute between England and Russia the greater forces were on the side of peace; yet it was with trembling that we predicted that there would be no war. Cause of war there is really none, the spheres of the two Empires being perfectly distinct, and the Afghan boundary simply requiring to be traced. But the irritation on both sides and the violence of the English Jingoism were such that a rupture might have been forced upon the governments. It is easier to forgive soldiers, who naturally want to be fighting, and who at all events risk their own lives, than it is to forgive civilians and journalists who recklessly goad nations into war. There are people in England who are as crazy on the subject of Russian aggression as other people are about the influence of the Jesuits. Mr. David Urquhart, a man of no mean ability, had persuaded himself that Lord Palmerston, one of the most pronounced of Russophobes, was in secret an agent of Russia. The mass of the people are totally ignorant of the question and could hardly point out Turkestan or Afghanistan on the map; but they are worked up by the alarmists into the belief that the occupation of some petty town, perhaps in consequence of a Turcoman raid, is the signal for a cataclysm of Russian invasion in which, unless they immediately fly to arms, the British Empire in India and England herself will be lost. Nothing satisfies or quiets these people. If Russia accepts reasonable terms and concurs in a settlement, it is only because she has not yet built the railroad by which her perfidious legions are to advance; as though, if she had formed the supposed design, she would not have built the railroad before she raised the question at all. Had the Jingoism succeeded in bringing on war, all the dependencies of England must have been in peril. Russia would certainly have struck at British Columbia; probably, if her cruisers could have got to sea, she would have struck at the mouth of the St. Lawrence, and Canada would have atoned, by the ruin of her trade, for the folly of the Music Halls and of the panic-mongers by whom they are inspired. Unhappily the danger is not yet over for England or for the colonies which would be dragged with her into a ruinous conflict. The English people seem still bent on shutting out Russia from access to an open sea. To an open sea a great and growing Empire must and will force its way, and if England obstinately refuses to withdraw her opposition and welcome Russia to the Mediterranean as a friendly power, in the end there must be war.

OUR friends in England have the excitement about Imperial Confederation all to themselves; but there the agitation is still on foot. It seems to have been stimulated by the offers of military assistance from the colonies, though these are rather evidences in favour of the free-will system than proofs of the expediency of a formal and compulsory arrangement. Mr. Forster is the soul of the movement. It seems that when the spirit of aggrandizement enters the Quaker breast, the house is found swept and garnished. This passion for a vast military confederation is consistent with Mr. Forster's reprobation of the Government for holding back the hounds of war in the Soudan. Surely a strange spectacle is that of a more than mature statesman careering over the country and with burning eloquence pressing upon the acceptance of all Britons, as the condition of their political salvation, a plan which he protests at the same time that it would be ruinous to reveal. "Confederate or perish," cried the *Pall Mall Gazette* in a fine frenzy the other day. Unless it can be made known to us how and for what purposes we are to confederate, we shall certainly have to embrace the alternative, though it may be perdition in the *Pall Mall's* eyes. Trade, Mr. Forster is always saying, follows the flag. An advocate of independence might reply that he did not propose to change the flag otherwise than by the insertion of the Maple Leaf, and that it would continue to be the symbol of the filial connection. But the argument is a patent fallacy. If the colonies take more of British goods in proportion to their population than the United States, this is not because the Union Jack floats over them, but because being newer countries they manufacture less for themselves. Absence of native manufactures in like manner gives England good markets in South America, Turkey and China, though there is not only no identity of flag but the utmost diversity of character. Does Mr. Forster suppose that before a Canadian or an Australian buys a plough he asks under what jurisdiction it was made, or that the people of the colonies strive to adapt their tastes and their habits of expenditure to the industrial interests of the Mother Country? But it is futile to argue against a scheme which is still locked in Mr. Forster's breast. If he could only come to Canada now he would see how little response there is to his appeals and how remote Imperial questions such as those of the Soudan and the Afghan frontier appear to the